

# Illegal Immigrants in Md. and Va. Out-Earn U.S. Peers, Study Says

Such Residents Are Less Likely to Have Health Insurance

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Illegal immigrants in [Maryland](#) and [Virginia](#) make more money than illegal immigrants nationwide, but their incomes are substantially lower than those of native residents of those states, and they are much less likely to have health insurance, a report says.

The study, released today by the Center for Immigration Studies, estimates that there are 11.3 million undocumented immigrants in the country. In Maryland, the 268,000 illegal immigrants are 5 percent of the state's population; in Virginia, they account for 3 percent of residents, with 259,000. The study used [U.S. Census Bureau](#) data from this year.

Counting undocumented immigrants is an inexact science, and it is difficult to determine how much change the numbers reflect. The study does not give an estimate for the District because its immigrant population is substantially smaller than Maryland's or Virginia's.

Although the percentage of illegal immigrants in the two states is roughly equivalent to their share of the national population, the study highlights disparities between undocumented immigrants in the Washington area and those elsewhere.

The average household income for illegal immigrants is \$45,748 nationally. In Maryland, it's \$58,061; in Virginia, \$61,112. The findings may reflect the greater overall wealth of the two states: The average household income for native residents is \$83,964 in Maryland and \$79,524 in Virginia, compared with \$66,952 nationwide.

But Steven A. Camarota, who wrote the report for the Washington-based center, which advocates limits on immigration, said it also suggests that a greater share of illegal immigrants in the Washington region are people who overstayed their entry visas rather than sneaked across the border.

"People who overstay are more likely to be foreign students and guest workers who are more educated. People who cross the border illegally tend to be the least educated," he said.

Nationwide, almost 59 percent of undocumented immigrants and their children (who may be U.S.-born citizens) are living in or near poverty. The figures are 40 percent in Maryland and 44 percent in Virginia.

Those rates are high compared with those for immigrant families overall (including legal immigrants and their children), 25 percent of whom are living in or near poverty in

Maryland, and 31 percent of whom are at those levels in Virginia. Native adults and their children fare best, with the share in or near the poverty level at 19 percent in Maryland and 23 percent in Virginia.

In the two states and nationally, a little more than half of illegal immigrants and their children have no health insurance, compared with about one in 10 native adults and their children.

The study also found higher rates in the use of public assistance by households headed by undocumented immigrants, who are ineligible for almost all benefits but whose children or spouses might qualify for food stamps, cash assistance or [Medicaid](#) if they are U.S.-born citizens or legal immigrants.

In Maryland and Virginia, about one in five illegal immigrant-headed households uses some form of social service, compared with one in six in native households in Maryland and one in seven in Virginia. (Nationwide, 40 percent of illegal immigrant-headed households use some type of benefit, compared with 19 percent of native households.)

The disparity between the households of illegal immigrants and native residents is the result not of a lack of work or legal status, Camarota said. "Most illegal aliens work, but their low education levels mean they are going to be very poor, and this results in a significant chance their children are going to rely on key social services," he said.

Randy Capps, a researcher at the nonpartisan Urban Institute who studies welfare use by immigrants and their children, said illegal immigrant families appear to be largely limiting themselves to programs such as subsidized school lunches and Medicaid. Regarding the program most commonly associated with welfare -- cash assistance to needy families -- fewer than 1 percent of illegal-immigrant households nationwide and in Maryland and Virginia use the benefit, compared with 3 percent of native households in Virginia, 5 percent of native households in Maryland and 5 percent nationwide.

Furthermore, Capps said, studies have shown that low-income children of immigrants are less likely to use social services than low-income children of native parents.

"Many [immigrant] parents are afraid of being reported to immigration services, or they might not even be aware of the program, so they don't enroll their children," Capps said.